



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 107<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 147

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2001

No. 24

## House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m.

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2001, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

### NORTH AMERICAN SLAVERY MEMORIAL COUNCIL ACT

The SPEAKER. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, it is a delight to be back here to serve the people.

I am here in honor of Black History Month. I would like to bring my colleagues' attention to legislation that I intend to introduce today. The bill is entitled the North American Slavery Memorial Council Act.

I believe that this bill can best be thought of by a quote from Papa Dallas Stewart. He was a former slave that was captured; and his comment sort of provides the essence, I think, of what my bill is trying to do. This is what he said: "And one thing I want you to promise me: that you are going to tell all the children my story." So my colleagues, we need to tell it.

Stewart, a former slave, knew firsthand the heartache and the pain that slavery could bring. As a child, his eyes were burned out when an overseer caught him simply studying the alphabet. He spent his life encouraging others to never forget the horrors of slav-

ery. He understood the problems of forgetting the past. He recognized that we must share the painful past in order to protect our future. We must help ensure that future generations grasp the injustice that occurred in North America's past so that we may never repeat it.

My bill is patterned after the Holocaust Museum Act and pays tribute to those who suffered and perished under slavery in North America.

Mr. Speaker, slavery infected our past and oppressed several ethnic groups. Education is one of the best weapons to prevent such injustices, and what better way to educate future generations than with a fitting tribute in our Nation's Capital to those who were enslaved in North America.

My bill is designed to ensure that Americans never forget the horrors of slavery. We have wisely given honor to those who lost their lives and suffered during the Holocaust. But we have neglected to honor those who lost their lives and were imprisoned by slavery. We should offer a proper tribute to those who were denied their freedom in North America, and I am confident that my bill will help to rectify this oversight.

Last year, the Roth Horowitz Gallery in New York City showed a splendid exhibition. It was entitled "Witness." The exhibit chronicled the practice of lynching between 1863 and 1960. An article stated that after the opening of the exhibit, hundreds of visitors had poured in to see the exhibit, many of them waiting in lines up to 20 minutes in freezing temperatures. After one viewer came out, this is what he said: "Perhaps the popularity of this exhibition should serve as an argument for a museum devoted to slavery."

Acknowledging slavery as a tragedy is very important. Groups have begun holding commemorations on their own. In fact, one group is the St. Paul's Community Baptist Church of Brook-

lyn, New York. The horror they are remembering is what is called the Middle Passage and the hundreds of years of enslavement that followed. The church pastor, the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood, would like every church and civic organization in this country to do the same.

Youngblood believes, along with many of his church congregants, that acknowledging, just simply acknowledging the pain of the past will pave the way for real change, political and personal.

Several noted psychologists contend that because of the trauma from this original deep wound, it was so great, so deep and has gone on so long publicly unrieved, it may account for some of our social ills.

As with the many public remembrances of the Jewish Holocaust, St. Paul's commemoration allows grieving for forefathers and mothers, acknowledging the psychic wounds whose agonies still are felt in our communities today. One church observer said, "You have to admit there was pain, real pain. Once you admit it, then you can heal it."

So, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this museum would seek to do. We can heal, and people healing will prevent division. One way is to acknowledge the past problems and injustices. Americans have a rich history, but we must be true in recalling our history and slavery is sadly a part of that history. This museum will stand as a beacon and not only pay tribute to those who were forced into slavery, but should also stand to help end slavery that still exists throughout the world.

For the sake of Papa Stewart and countless others, we must never forget the past. I encourage my colleagues to join with me in cosponsoring the North American Slavery Museum bill.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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